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TRAFFIC ON ROUTE 7 REVEALS POSSIBILITY
OF A HIGH LEVEL OF LOGISTIC SUPPORT
FOR COMMUNIST FORCES IN NORTHERN LAOS



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W A R N I N G

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TRAFFIC ON ROUTE 7 REVEALS POSSIBILITY
OF A HIGH LEVEL OF LOGISTIC SUPPORT
FOR COMMUNIST FORCES IN NORTHERN LAOS

A preliminary analysis of aerial photography taken over North Vietnam and Laos from March through early May 1964 together with reports of road-watch teams suggests that there was sufficient truck traffic during this period to permit a buildup of Communist supplies for the recent fighting in the Plaine des Jarres. The size of the photographic and road-watch sample is still so small, however, that it is impossible to estimate with a high degree of confidence the total volume of supply activity. These sources have confirmed, nevertheless, that route 7 is the main supply road for the estimated 11,800 Communist troops in the northern Laotian provinces of Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, and Vientiane. In order to support the type and level of military activities carried out prior to the recent push in the Plaine des Jarres the Communist forces in these three provinces would have required between 15 and 20 truckloads daily. If the days during March and April on which reasonably complete photographic coverage is available are representative, truck traffic entering Laos over route 7 from North Vietnam was more than adequate to meet the supply requirements in the three northern provinces of Laos and probably constituted a buildup.

1. Importance of Route 7

Route 7 leads west from its junction with route 1 from a point near Phu Dien Chau, North Vietnam, to the Plaine des Jarres and beyond.* This route has now been identified as the main and possibly the only supply route that can be used for trucks supporting Communist troops in the Laotian provinces of Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, and Vientiane. The limiting sectors of route 7 have an estimated capacity of 100 trucks each way per day in the dry season and 33 per day in the rainy season. This capacity, even in the rainy season, is greater than the estimated daily requirement for military supplies of 45 to 60 short tons, or 15 to 20 truckloads. It is not necessary, therefore, for the trucks to move every day; they can be grouped into periodic convoys. Information available at present from photography and road-watch teams is not sufficiently complete to make possible a determination of how often these convoys move.

* See the map, inside back cover.

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2. Truck Traffic

Photographic missions flown over North Vietnam and Laos during the period from 6 March to 3 May 1964 as part of a new program of aerial reconnaissance of Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam covered parts of route 7 on a total of 23 days, 1/ as shown in the table. Only three missions, one in March and two in April, however, covered 50 percent or more of the route. These missions and reports from road-watch teams suggest a high level of truck activity from March through mid-April.

A single mission in March covered the entire route, but even this coverage was limited by partial or scattered clouds. On 6 March, photography revealed 100 trucks parked along route 7 and 15 trucks heading west toward the Plaine des Jarres. A road-watch team reported that a convoy of 200 trucks moved west toward the Plaine on 14 March. 2/ Photographic coverage of the route after 6 March was not sufficient to confirm the 200-truck convoy on 14 March or to reveal any other large convoy. If these 200 trucks carried only supplies, the amount that could have been delivered by the convoy would have been sufficient for more than 10 days.

Photography taken on two missions flown in April revealed additional convoys. The mission flown on 4 April spotted 47 trucks moving west toward Ban Ban and 72 possible parked trucks. The same mission located 7 possible tanks and at least 28 trucks on the route beyond Ban Ban. This photography coincided to some extent with a road-watch team's report of a total of 236 trucks heading west on route 7 during the period from 6 to 9 April. A road-watch team reported that 200 trucks moved east between 0820 and 1530 hours on 14 April and that a convoy of 68 trucks was eastbound on 16 April. It was reported that 60 to 100 trucks daily entered and left Laos in the vicinity of Nong Het (near the Laotian border) from 12 to 16 April. The second of the missions with good photographic coverage, flown on 15 April, revealed a total of 146 trucks on route 7. Sixty-eight of these trucks were heading west, 22 were heading east, and 56 were parked. A mission flown on 25 April noted 34 trucks moving east. Presumably the groups of trucks observed heading west on the various days could have been individual convoys, for the driving time to cover the entire route is between 1 and 2 days.

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With the limited size of the photographic sample it is impossible to determine the size of a convoy and how often convoys move over the route.

Surveillance of Route 7, North Vietnam to Laos
March Through Early May 1964

	<u>Total for Period</u>	<u>Maximum for Any One Day</u>
Trucks observed by photography <u>a/</u>		
Headed west	197	78
Headed east	98	34
Parked	295	100
Total observed	<u>590</u>	
Trucks observed by road-watch teams <u>b/</u>		
Headed west	736 to 936	200
Headed east	300 to 500	200
Parked	0	0
Total observed	<u>1,036 to 1,436</u>	
Number of days on which photographic coverage was obtained		23
Number of missions with at least 50-percent coverage of the route		3
Number of days for which reports of road-watch teams were received		9
Mileage from the junction with route 1 to the junction with route 4 at Ban Na Hoi (in kilometers)		315

a. During the period from 6 March to 3 May 1964.
b. During the period from 6 March to 16 April 1964.

Sources:

1. NPIC. NPIC/R-1207/64, Traffic Analysis Survey, North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, 22 May 64. S/NO FOREIGN DISSEM.
2. CIA. CS, 21 Apr 64. S/NO FOREIGN DISSEM.

Analysts:




Coord:



25X1A



Railroads and Selected Roads

-  Railroad
 Road
 Route number

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A horizontal number line with tick marks at 0, 25, 50, and 100. The word "Miles" is written below the line.

those recognized by the U.S. Government.

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